

CLUB WOMEN AND THE BLOOMER.

By Ellen M. Henrotin.



A LITTLE article in a Baltimore paper saying that a club had been formed with the avowed purpose of adopting a rainy day dress attracted my attention and recalled the various efforts which women have made to free themselves from the long skirt. The agitation in favor of correct dress is nearly fifty years old, counting from the time when Mrs. Bloomer invented the garb which bears her name.

Various clubs have taken up this subject. During the Columbian Exposition, at the first congress, that of representative women, there was a session devoted to the

regulation of dress. It was a very crowded session, showing the interest felt in the subject.

At a lunch party not long since there were present three women—a society woman, an elderly woman who was distinguished by always wearing one style of dress, and a professional woman. The professional woman said:

"I consider that women have a great ethical responsibility in this matter of dress, a responsibility as wage-earners, and a greater one, if that were possible, as wage-spenders. Why, they largely control the dry goods trade, and thousands of men and women are employed providing for the needs and the changing fashions of woman's raiment, and hundreds of millions of dollars are made and spent in this one branch of industry. And then think of the mental and physical effect on themselves and their families of what is known as dress, and think of the drain on the family income which the dress of the mother and daughter represents."

The society lady volunteered. "It may seem a simple question, but from my standpoint it is a very complicated one. My daughters, for instance, have just come out in society; neither of them is very young, they are both graduates of Vassar, and bright, clever girls; and yet it really takes a very large portion of their time to keep well dressed, not to speak of the enormous amount of money spent. Mary said to me this morning: 'Really, mamma, I don't think it's worth the trouble,' and I felt inclined to agree with her, and would have done so if my back had been turned to her, but she looked so charming in the very dress which had taken so much of her time that really I could not. My daughters must be in society, and they must be dressed as other girls to be acceptable; and to be acceptable they must be beautiful. After all, is it not the duty of every woman to be appropriately dressed? It's very easy to say that it is not the amount of money to be spent which makes the beauty of our clothes, but every one knows that simplicity is the most expensive thing in the world."

To this the elderly lady: "Do you remember Polonius's advice to his son, 'Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy, But not expressed in fancy; rich, not gaudy; For the apparel oft proclaims the man.'"

"When I reached sixty years of age I solved the dress problem. It is an odd thing that in America there is no dress for an elderly woman. A very good French modiste came to New York whose specialty was to make dresses for women of a certain age. She had charming ideas and exquisite taste, but the American woman would not patronize her. I myself think it's absurd to see a woman—well, let us say of sixty—dressed in the same style as

The Hardest Worked Washerwomen in the World.

THE hardest worked washerwomen in the world are the Koreans. They have to wash about a dozen dresses for their husbands, and, inasmuch as every man wears pantaloons or drawers so baggy that they come up to his neck like those of a clown, they have plenty to do. The washing is usually done in cold water, and often in running streams. The clothes are pounded with paddles until they shine like a shirt front fresh from a Chinese laundry.

The Japanese rip their garments apart for every washing, and they iron their clothes by spreading them on a flat board and leaning this up against the house to dry. The sun takes the wrinkles out of the clothes, and some of them have quite a lustre. The Japanese woman does her washing out of doors. Her washtub is not more than six inches high, and is about as big around as the average dishpan. She gets the dirt out of the clothes by rubbing them between her hands. She sometimes uses Japanese soap, which is full of grease, and works away with her bare feet. The Chinese girls do their washing in much the same way.

The washing in Egypt is usually done by the men. The Egyptian washerman stands naked on the banks of the Nile and slaps the wet clothes, with a noise like the shot of a pistol, on the smooth stones at the edge of the running water, and such fellah women as wash pound the dirt out of their clothes in the same way. A243

French women pound the dirt out paddles, often slamming the clothes upon stones, as the Egyptians do.

a girl of twenty, and yet you see that ridiculous sight every day. It is the religious duty of a woman as she grows older to dress well, to be even more particular rather than less so, but her dress should conform to the eternal fitness of things, of nature's order and method, and therefore should be appropriate both in material and style for her age, and, to my mind, the laws of fitness and beauty require that it should have a certain permanency of aspect and be more or less on the one pattern, or rather, shall I say, the one style. When women are young they are entitled to this kaleidoscopic aspect, but when they are my age their chief value to society is the fact that you know where to find them, and their dress should express this. They thus assist in furthering the laws of fitness and beauty, and, may I add, of serenity."

The professional lady: "Oh, I agree with you so heartily. I should be the last to advocate a woman to be eccentric, or even to attract attention by her dress on the street. The outdoor life which women now lead—bicycling, golfing, etc.—has introduced the short skirt, and leggings and gaiters of the color of the skirt; thus any woman can wear a dress quiet, convenient and, above all, cleanly. If a woman is self-supporting, or must go out every day to an office, then her short skirt is of untold comfort and use. It does not wear out quickly round the bottom, keeps dry and clean. In Summer the short skirt can be worn with a shirt waist, and in Winter with a jacket. Short trousers the color of the skirt can be worn in the Winter for warmth, and a short dark skirt of silk or any other material to correspond with the dress, if necessary; no woman need hesitate to wear such a dress, no matter what her social position. Slowly but surely the woman with a dirty bedraggled skirt will disappear, and a woman from her waist down will be as neatly and conveniently dressed as the shirt waist enables her now to be from her waist up. The evolution of the shirt waist itself is a case in point. Women of all conditions of life are vastly better dressed by the introduction of that one article. It now remains for sensible women to adopt the short skirt for street wear and continue the good work. Little by little woman is ceasing to be the slave of fashion, and is applying the rule of good taste to dress as well as to all other questions which touch her life."

The social leader: "My judgment approves every word you have said, but oh, the fleshpots of Egypt! I have always loved fine clothes, and even to-day it is a temptation to me to buy a beautiful thing whether I need it or not, or whether it is appropriate or not. I've always enjoyed the possession of a large assortment of impossible pretty slippers. The shape of many of them makes it impossible for me to wear them more than a few minutes at a time on some state occasion, and yet I am always at them as they stand in a row in my closet, lined full of white paper to keep their shape. I have mentioned never to purchase another pair. My daughters come and look at them, and I know that it is not an ethical example. And yet there they are, and I cannot be so absolutely foolish as the woman who sent all hers to be given to the poor during a Winter of great scarcity. I believe my daughters will be more sensible women at my age than I am. I honestly try to encourage them in practical, sensible ideas."

The elderly lady: "It is difficult for a young woman to be sensible on the subject of dress, because, to tell the truth, she has all the men on the side of nonsense. It is an undeniable fact that men like fine clothes, and that the girl who dresses to suit their artistically developed taste, which is usually very good, is the favorite. A girl said the other day in my hearing, in answer to the question whether she would prefer beauty or intellect, that 'she liked the beauty, because you couldn't see intellect from the other side of the street,' and while her idea was rather crude, it is really the principle on which many women act in regard to their dress. A woman of my age has all these problems solved for her. You see, age has its compensations."

The professional lady: "All that we need is the courage of our convictions, and no one can accuse the new woman of being deficient in that quality. The long, full skirt, lined with light silk, which must be raised from the sidewalk with both hands, is an absurdity when worn by the healthy, helpful, modern woman. It is an anachronism. Were women to dress sensibly, or appropriately, I don't mind which word you use, their example would banish from the public streets all gaudily dressed women, and would increase the sense of fitness and harmony which is being developed in society, and which is even now apparent in the great metropolis of the world."

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President General Federation of Women's Clubs.

SEAWEED has its decorative uses, and will be found a very pretty medium in the hands of a tasteful amateur. It may be used for borders of marine water colors and on mirror frames, where it may lap over on to the glass here and there with artistic effects. Monograms and many fanciful designs may be formed with seaweed, and it makes an excellent border for the glass of an aquarium. When collected, the seaweed should be dried between blotting paper and then washed in a solution of mastic gum dissolved in turpentine, which gives it a fresh appearance. It should then be affixed to the leaves of a scrap book by means of gum, and can readily be detached by moistening the reverse side of the leaves.



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